B A L D O C K U R B A N D I S T R I C T C O U N C I L

A N N U A L R E P O R T

of the

M E D I C A L O F F I C E R O F H E A L T H

for the year

1 9 5 5.

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BALDOCK URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

To the Chairman and members of the Council.

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Lewis and Gentlemen,

By direction of Ministry of Health Circular 17/55 I submit a report on the health of the district for the year 1955.

The local vital statistics give a generally favourable picture for Baldock; the local birth rate for the year (15.8) has returned towards the previously higher than National annual rates. The very low death (7.6) indicates the continued favourable age distribution of population. There was no single infant death during the year and the stillbirth rate was below the National rate.

During the year there was again a marked absence from the district of serious infectious diseases but reports are supplied on a small outbreak of paratyphoid fever and a larger outbreak of scalp ringworm. With the continued higher-than-average local distribution of young families the health aspects of housing continue particularly pressing in Baldock.

I would acknowledge having received during the year every consideration and help from your Council and its officers.

I am, Mrs. Lewis and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

V.R.WALKER.

District Medical Officer of Health.

May, 1956.

SECTION A LOCAL STATISTICS

Area of District	542 acres.
Population - Registrar General's Estimate for mid-1955	6,710
Number of separately rated heriditaments at 31st December, 1955	1,954
Number of separate dwellings (included in above figure) at 31st December, 1955)...	1,707
Rateable Value	£38,420
Sum Represented by a Penny Rate... ...	£155.1.3d.

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1955

		Totals	Male	Female	Baldock Urban District	Comparable rates for England and Wales
LIVE BIRTHS	(Legitimate	101	55	46		
	(Illegitimate	5	2	3		
	(All	106	57	49		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population					15.8	15.0
STILLBIRTHS	(Legitimate	1	1	-		
	(Illegitimate	1	-	1		
	(All	2	1	1		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births					18.5	23.1
DEATHS		51	27	24		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population					7.6	11.7

DEATH RATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE

All infants per 1,000 live births ...	Nil	24.9
Rate for legit. infants per 1,000 legitimate births	Nil	
Rate for illegit. infants per 1,000 illegitimate births	Nil	

Actual number of such deaths:

	(a) Under 4 weeks	and (b) Under 1 year.
Legitimate ...	Nil	Nil
Illegitimate ...	Nil	Nil

Deaths from Pregnancy, childbirth or abortion	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites)	12
Deaths from Measles	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases ...	1

Comment on Vital Statistics for the Year.

The estimated mid-year population showed a further increase of 40 persons. Live births (106) were 12 more than for 1954 while the figure for deaths (51) was identical with that for the previous year.

SECTION B GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

No important change occurred during the year.

SECTION C SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

1. Water Supply. All premises in the district are provided with a direct piped supply of water, which is treated and supplied in bulk to the Council's Undertaking by the First Garden City Ltd. The supply has been satisfactory both in quantity and quality, and results of chemical analyses and bacteriological examinations of samples have also been satisfactory.

2. Sewerage and Sewage Disposal. The Council has under consideration the relaying of the outfall sewer at Icknield Way through the site of the disused gas works. The existing sewer is in a very bad condition, surcharging and subject to frequent blockages.

3. Caravan Site. There is one caravan site in the area for which consent was granted under the Town & Country Planning Act, 1947 and license under the Public Health Act, 1936. This site is within the curtilage of Bondor Ltd., adjacent to their sports field, and has provision for six trailer type caravans. There is on the site water closet accommodation and washing facilities for the occupants, together with a piped water supply and facilities for the storage and collection of domestic refuse. The site is well maintained and the general circumstances satisfactory from the sanitary point of view.

4. Public Cleansing. It has become increasingly difficult to maintain a regular collection due to the lack of maintaining staff in this service. The low rates of pay do not encourage suitable employees whilst local industry offers greater financial gain.

A new petrol engined refuse vehicle was delivered in December and will come into service on the 1st January, 1956.

5. Sanitary Inspection of the Area (other than Dwellinghouses and food premises)

(a) Number of inspections carried out under Factories Act	14
(b) Number of inspections carried out under Petroleum Acts	12
(c) Number of inspections carried out in connection with drainage and sewage.. ...	79
(d) Number of inspections carried out in connection with water supply and sampling ...	25
(e) Miscellaneous inspections	41
(f) Number of nuisances investigated and dealt with...	20
(g) Number of investigations regarding infectious diseases	3

(h) Rodent Control During the year 79 separate premises were treated for infestations of rats and mice, involving 362 visits and inspections. In addition, maintenance treatment of sewers was carried out in May and November.

SECTION D HOUSING

Council Housing Scheme

(a) A scheme of 34 Unity non-traditional houses was commenced at Hopewell Road. These are due for completion by mid-year 1956.

(b) Negotiations are proceeding for the erection of 105 Gregory traditional type houses at Anchor Field with appurtenant roads and sewers. This work is scheduled for commencement in the Autumn 1956.

Private Dwellings

A total of 15 private dwellings were completed during the year.

Slum Clearance.

During the year a return was made to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government under the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954. This provided figures relating to the estimated number of properties that may have to be dealt with under the heading of Clearance or Demolition Orders. Other information was given indicating the speed at which it is hoped to be able to deal with such conditions.

A detailed survey of all old and unfit properties was commenced by the Council staff in the Autumn.

Inspection of Dwellinghouses during the Year.

(1)	Number of dwellinghouses inspected (for housing defects under Public Health or Housing Act) ...	63
	Number of inspections made for the purpose ...	82
(2)	Number of dwellinghouses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation...	5
(3)	Number of dwellinghouses (exclusive of those referred to under (2) above) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation.	28
(4)	Number of dwellinghouses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices under Public Health or Housing Acts:-	
	(a) By Owners	-
	(b) By Local Authority in default of owners ...	-
(5)	Number of defective dwellinghouses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or its officers	12

SECTION E INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

During the year 59 inspections of food premises (including shops and market stalls) were made and, where necessary, informal action was taken to secure compliance with the Council's Byelaws and the Food & Drugs Act, 1938.

There are no ice-cream manufacturers in the district.

15 Samples of ice-cream from retailers were taken and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for bacteriological examination (methylene blue test). Grade I results were obtained on all of them.

There is no slaughterhouse, food factory, or dairy (other than one dairy farm, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture) within the district.

The following foodstuffs were condemned as unfit for human consumption.

25 lbs Imported Canned Meat.
46 lbs Cooked Gammon.
2 lbs Tinned Fruit and Vegetables.

SECTION F PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

For the year 1955 totals of notified infectious diseases (after correction) were: Measles 128, Infectious hepatitis 2, Whooping Cough 1, Acute Pneumonia 1, Paratyphoid fever 2, and Anterior poliomyelitis (non paralytic) 1.

Measles was heavily prevalent, particularly at infant school age, in the second and early part of the third quarter.

Anterior poliomyelitis was limited to a single isolated case in the fourth quarter.

Two cases of paratyphoid fever (both in children) were recognised in August and early September. On contact-tracing the mother of one was found to be a carrier with a recent history of two weeks acute gastro-intestinal illness (almost certainly clinical paratyphoid fever) and other children in this family were found to be healthy temporary intestinal carriers. The date of local infection was round the middle of July and the only common likely foodstuff consumed was cream cakes or pastries purchased from more than one supplier. This date coincided in time with a sharp wide-spread national prevalence of such infection, where the strongly suspected source was Chinese frozen egg used in cake manufacture. The type of infecting organism in Baldock cases was 'Salmonella paratyphoid B phage type 1.'.

Diphtheria was again absent from the district during the year. Despite continued rarity of this formerly dreaded disease the offer of infant protection by immunisation continues to be accepted by a good proportion of parents. For children under two years combined protection against diphtheria and whooping cough is now available from both Welfare Centres and General Practitioners.

Local out-break of scalp ring-worm.

In the last months of 1954 prevalence of scalp ringworm was discovered among children in Baldock. Exhaustive surveys of a children's institution primarily affected and certain schools attended (both maintained and private) located the source of infestation to an unrecognised case of some duration in a young adolescent, in whom the condition is slow and atypical, spreading from the private children's institution to the schools attended, with some further spread in two or three instances to pre-school children in private families in the town. Screening of contacts with a Wood's U.V.R.lamp in a dark room identified early new cases and by close co-operation with the family and institutional medical attendants the outbreak was brought under control early in the year 1955 by energetic x-ray epilation treatment from the Hospital Specialist Services. The type of parasite was identified in three cases by the Hospital Pathological Services as Microsporum Audouini, which could be reasonably presumed the infecting type for the whole outbreak. In all some 15 children were confirmed as infected. No further case has since been reported and the outbreak can be deemed closed.

Three points of interest arose from the outbreak:-

(1) The special liability of young 3-5 year old children to become infected after very short family or institutional contact;

(2) The number of early cases which can only be picked up by the test of fluorescence under the Wood's lamp, and

(3) the slow development of any signs of disease after scalp infection, requiring re-inspection by Wood's lamp at intervals of three - four weeks after last recognised case, to exclude continued slow hidden spread in any groups of children of susceptible age.

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Deaths during the Year 1955.

Age Periods	New-Cases Respiratory M	New-Cases Respiratory F	New-Cases Non-Respiratory M	New-Cases Non-Respiratory F	Deaths Respiratory M	Deaths Respiratory F	Deaths Non-Respiratory M	Deaths Non-Respiratory F
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	2(2)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
35 - 45	2(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65 and over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not known								
Totals	6(4)	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Deaths allocated by the Registrar-General after final transfers					-	-	-	-

Foot-note: Figures of new cases include inward transfers from other areas, the numbers of such being shown additionally in brackets.

Comment.

New notifications during the year from the local population is seen to number 2 males and 1 female (with 4 inward transfers - all male); the figures for the previous year were 2 males and 4 females.

No death from tuberculosis is finally allocated to the Baldock district.

V.R.WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health.

July, 1956.